

## For life and love

By Charlotte M. Braeme.

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## CHAPTER I.

## Man's Love and Woman's.

I had stolen away from all the noise and the display of the celebration. The fact that I, Rosalie Scott, mistress of the vast estate of Wood-hay, had that day come of age and that the tenants were celebrating the event, meant less to me than the thought of the man I loved. So I had slipped away and wandered into the forest to think of Gerard Baxter.

We had met, he and I, when I was studying music in London. He was a painter—poor, wretchedly poor; and he had no idea I was a great heiress, but he believed me to be no richer than himself. We had fallen in love with each other. I had promised him that, as soon as he painted a picture that would sell for \$100, I would be his wife. He had worked like mad over that picture, but had failed to get the desired price. As a result, I had heard, he had despaired and had utterly lost interest in life.

Even as I was thinking of him I looked up and saw him standing before me. He was shabby, gaunt and desperate looking. My heart leaped at sight of him. I mentally resolved I would marry him at once, despite his poverty. I had more than enough wealth for both.

I ran forward to greet him; but something in his eyes made me falter. "Gerard!" I cried, "aren't you glad to see me?"

"Nothing could make me glad," he returned, shaking my hand as if it stung him, "except to know that this would be the last day I had to live."

"Gerard, all this place is mine; it is for me they are making all this celebration. Woodhay is mine, and I—I am yours. If you will have me!"

"Listen to me!" he says, taking me by the wrist with a grasp which absolutely bristles with flesh. "Listen to me for a minute. You know that I come here to tell you something, Allie—something which it hurts me more to tell than it will hurt you to hear."

"What is it?" I ask, frightened by the strange lurid glow which lights up the blackness of his eyes.

"Something which will make you hate me!"

"You hurt my wrist," I say pitiously. "Poor little arm!" he exclaims, and, stooping suddenly, he kissed it. "Allie, isn't it hard that I, who would lie down and die for you this minute, if I could, must hurt you?"

"You have not hurt me much," I answer, smiling through some childish tears.

"But I must hurt you. Allie, walk up and down here with me for a few minutes, while I tell you my story—just here—I shall not detain you very long."

We walk up and down, through the sunshine and the shadow, the rushing of the river in the ears. As long as I live I shall remember these minutes—not more than ten are they, though they seem a century of pain and sorrow to us both.

"And so I grew reckless, Allie. I did not care what became of me. The picture that was to have made my fortune went for half its value, and I—I tried to find oblivion where the wretched look of the man I loved, and that what little self-respect remained to me, and with it all hope of ever winning you."

"If you had the patience—"

"But I had no patience. As long as I live I shall remember these minutes—not more than ten are they, though they seem a century of pain and sorrow to us both."

"The green leaves flicker, the river brawls among its mossy bowlders; now and then a shadow of a white bird, as on the soft breathings of the June air, I do not speak—I let him tell his story of his own way, when he has finished, I will tell him mine."

"I lodged with a woman named White—a wretched, quarrelsome woman, the widow of a color sergeant. I lived in her house, boarding with her. I loved her mother. She let me know that if she had not, I must have starved, or put an end to myself. I was too haughty to do that. I thought I had found employment. I had sold everything for which I could get money—even the locket which I had inherited from the woman had a daughter—a girl whom I had often admired for her pretty face—she took it into her head to fall in love with me."

"He pauses, with a smile of angry scorn and humiliation. I say nothing—not a single word."

"I wonder what else you can do?"

"I pity you; and, if you will let me help you—as if you were my own brother—I shall count it a kindness. And now I must go, she will be calling for me."

"Do not offer me money, Allie; I could never take money from you. But I will make a 'fresh start'—I will work hard for your sake, and some day or other we may be friends."

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